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ABSTRACT

Universities and colleges exist to serve, educate, and help the student population. Although university personnel are there to help students achieve these goals, misunderstandings often lead faculty and student services personnel to operate at cross-purposes. This workshop explores the roots of these communication problems and offers suggestions for closing the gap between these two groups. Seven statements, which outline some of the sources of potential conflicts between faculty and student services workers, are used to generate discussion: (1) Each group has different goals for their interactions with students; (2) There are different hiring procedures, salary charts, and tenure requirements for each group; (3) There is a hierarchy in most educational institutions; (4) Territoriality is an important issue; (5) There is often a lack of contact between faculty and student services personnel; (6) There is a lack of knowledge about what the other side actually does; and (7) The biggest problem is a lack of communication between the groups. Twelve suggestions that student services personnel can employ for improving relations with faculty are given, which include: find faculty allies, participate in faculty orientation and faculty development, and keep faculty informed of events in student services. (RJM)

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FACULTY AND STUDENT SERVICES: FRIENDS OR FOES: A WORKSHOP

ACPA 1996 Convention, March 1996, Baltimore MD ,

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Purpose of the workshop:

Universities and colleges exist to serve the student population, to educate them and to help them in their personal development. Personnel in various positions at the university or college are there to help students achieve these goals. However, faculty and student services personnel often seem to be operating at cross-purposes. The goals of one group may come into conflict with the goals of another group. There are instances in which faculty and student services may disagree with one another about a particular situation. Some of the conflicts results from misunderstanding and miscommunication but there are times when there are legitimate conflicts between the goals of the two groups.

One problem area seems to be that neither group truly and fully understands the other. Each group has stated that its purpose is to serve students, to assist in their development. What form this service takes and how development is defined may vary. Yet, the lack of understanding between faculty and student service personnel can sometimes cause problems for the very students that both groups serve. Sometimes the lack of understanding escalates into dislike and distrust which can grow into a large divide. What underlies this distrust? How can the chasm between the two groups be bridged? This workshop will explore these issues and offer suggestions for closing the gap.

Activity: Distribute Handout A. Give participants a few moments to complete both sides.

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HANDOUT A

Side One

Circle the group to which you belong.

FACULTY **STUDENT SERVICES**

Answer the following questions briefly.

1. What is your biggest complaint about the "other group"?

2. What do you think the "other group" does best?

HANDOUT A

Side Two

Pretend that you are the group **NOT** circled on Side One.

1. What is your biggest complaint about the "other group"?
(In other words, what do you think is the other group's biggest complaint about your group?)

2. What do you think the "other group" does best?
(In other words, what do you think the other group thinks you do best?)

Have participants pair up - one faculty and one student service person. Give them 5-10 minutes to share what they wrote down. Then have them get into a group of four and repeat the process.

On newsprint or a chalkboard, compile a list of responses. Allow a few minutes for discussion.

Pose the following question: Why does this distrust and even enmity exist? The following are a few observations about the situation.

For each statement: read the statement and ask for input from each side.

1. Each group has different goals for their interactions with students, views the student from different perspectives, works from different missions.

   (Ask members of each group to define their goals for working with students and working within the university/college setting.)

   Student services is geared to look at the whole person, at total student development. Their aim is to focus on the development of the student as a whole. They work on academic, personality, vocational, spiritual and many other dimensions. The courses they take for their degrees include courses on the development of college students as well as courses in the helping relationship. Most student service personnel go into the field because of the opportunity for direct contact with students, for the chance to work one-on-one with students. While they are concerned with running residence halls and putting on programs for the student union and working with the Greek system, the ultimate goal is to help the student develop into a well-rounded person.

Faculty are concerned primarily with the academic aspect of college, with imparting knowledge of a particular discipline. They have focused primarily on one discipline during their academic career and most have few, if any, courses in education or in student development. Teaching is one aspect of the faculty job and that often involves large classes. Teaching loads vary but most teach 3 or four classes which could mean 100-400 students. In addition to preparing for 2 or 3 different courses, faculty must also engage in research. Their focus is also on committee work and community service, necessary for achieving tenure. Many faculty may be sensitive to the needs of the developing student but their primary job is to teach certain material. In some places, teaching is considered secondary to research and publishing. Time spent with students, outside of the classroom, is not always rewarded within the faculty salary structure. For instance, faculty are expected to advise students but receive little recognition in terms of tenure reviews for spending much time working with students. Thus many faculty do a perfunctory job of advising and often resent the time involved. If teaching and advising activities are not valued or valued highly in the tenure process, faculty will put less emphasis on those activities.

2. There are different hiring procedures, salary charts and tenure requirements for each group. Seldom does one group understand how the other group really functions within the university or college structure.

   (Ask a representative from each group to explain what process they went through when they were hired. Share these experiences. Then ask each group to list what their job description is. Next have them list what they think the job description of the other group is. Again, share these. This can be done in pairs.)

Hiring procedures differ. While student service personnel may be interviewed by several people within the department in which they will work (e.g. residence life, career center, etc.) and by the administrator in charge of that department, the hiring process is often less intense than for faculty. Potential faculty often go through 2 days of interviews. Most must be interviewed by highly placed administrators, including the President at smaller colleges, face faculty panels of 5-7 and give teaching demonstrations as well as research colloquium. The on-campus process follows several preliminary interviews, often including phone interviews with 4-5 people on the other line.

Student service personnel seldom have tenure and their job security issues are more similar to business than to teaching faculty. They are rated primarily on how well they do their job: working with students. Faculty face a more ambiguous evaluation system. It is often unclear about the importance of the various elements of the job. Requirements for tenure are seldom clearly delineated and it can be difficult for faculty to ascertain exactly how well they are doing.

As it has becomes more difficult to get tenure and even teaching jobs, faculty, particularly junior faculty, have become more focused on those activities which will achieve the aim of tenure. Frequently achieving tenure and promotion means publication in refereed journals. Such activities require enormous amounts of time spent on research, in libraries and in laboratories. This means less time to worry about students and their development and less time to spend on activities not directly related to the classroom and to research. Anything that gets in the way of the pursuit of tenure can be seen as an annoyance. It is here that conflicts can arise.

For example: On a small campus with no testing center, student services personnel advocate for students with learning disabilities and promote policies that allow students with learning disabilities to take oral or, untimed, tests. The faculty must administer these alternative test forms. This administration can add many hours a week to a faculty teaching load if there are many students in this situation. While such testing procedures are valid for the student's education, implementation increases the faculty workload. Resentment has and will occur as faculty see student services personnel as the people who have made their lives more difficult.

3. There is a hierarchical structure in most educational institutions although it may be unspoken and unofficial.

(Ask each group to create a visual, ranking various elements of the university/college. Include administrators,deans, faculty, student services, and other departments.)

For good or bad, there is a hierarchy in education. It is seldom articulated although anyone who spends time on a campus can detect it. Such hierarchical ranking even occurs in terms of departments; some are seen as better or more desirable than others, or more worthy of funds or more prestigious.

(Ask faculty for examples of this hierarchy among departments.)

(Ask student services if there is a hierarchy among student services departments.)

4. Territoriality is also an issue. People see certain areas as their own. This can occur particularly when people feel a lack of power. Thus, they want to protect what they see as their "turf."

(Ask each group to list 3 areas which they consider to be their "own.")

Each group wants to protect what they see as their "turf." When another group is seen an encroaching on "protected territory", resentment can arise. This may be linked to a fear that one will be seen as unnecessary. Or it may be that one feels powerless in many other areas and this is the one arena in which power can be exerted.

(Ask for examples of how they have seen the other group encroaching on "protected territory."

Sometimes there is encroachment sanctioned by the system. For example, student services people seldom come to faculty meetings since they do not have faculty status in most institutions and are not often invited. However, faculty vote on some issues that are student services-related such as Greek rush schedules. These decisions affect the work of student services yet student services does not control their own situation. When this happens, misunderstandings and resentment can occur.

5. There is often a lack of contact between faculty and student services personnel.

(Ask each group to list the last 5 times they had professional contact with someone from the other group - excluding today. It is necessary to note, however, that attendees at the American College Personnel Association conference may not be typical faculty. Thus, the answers might be more frequent contact that experienced in the general faculty/student services population.)

Often the groups are in separate buildings and work on different schedules. Student service personnel work schedules that are more standard than do faculty. Often they work in the evenings or on weekends.

Faculty may be on campus only for classes (time spent in a classroom) and office hours or other university duties. Other time is spent in laboratories or the library, places where casual contact is difficult. Shared office space may make the atmosphere less conducive to faculty spending large amounts of time there as well.

Since classrooms and student service offices seldom are in the same building, there may be little physical contact. Offices may be a great distance apart. Since casual, ordinary contact is on way to get to know a colleague, such physical separateness makes forming relationships with people outside a department difficult.

(Ask each person to draw a rough map of their campus. Mark academic and student services buildings. Discuss how easy it is to access each.)

There may be little contact, then, except when the administration forces togetherness, such as on committees. And then territoriality can come back into play. When the university or college is segmented and not seen as a whole working toward a common goal, resentment can occur when one group thinks another group has encroached on "protected territory."

In addition, social contact is often minimal. Social functions such as holiday parties are limited to a department of a college or a division and seldom cross such lines except for huge university-wide functions. And at those functions, intact groups tend to stay together unless a deliberate attempt is made to mix the groups up.

6. There is a lack of knowledge about what the other side actually does during their work day. Each groups may have the (mistaken) impression that the other group has an abundance of time during the workday and few tasks that have to be accomplished.

(Have each group list what the other group does during an average workday. Then have people pair up and share.
Next have people create a list of what they do during a typical day. Have them share these lists in pairs.)

Faculty seldom appreciate exactly what student services personnel do and student services personnel seldom understand all that is involved in being faculty. Unless one has served in both roles, all that is seen are the surface duties. For example, faculty appear in the classroom at a given hour, give tests, grade tests and papers, advise students and hold office hours. Yet, few student services personnel understand all that is involved in being a competent teacher as well as a competent researcher.

Likewise, few faculty understand all that is involved in working in student services. They may see such personnel as occasionally handing down discipline, booking bands, giving talks in the dormitory. They seldom recognize how much work of student service personnel is done "afterhours" and how much work goes into program planning.

A lack of knowledge about what the other group's job involves can lead to misperceptions about how "easy" the life of the other group is. In reality, each group's job is difficult, multifaceted and demands long hours. Resources for doing the job are often scarce and support is not always at the optimal or even the requested level.

7. The biggest problem is a lack of communication between the groups.

There is a need for faculty and student services to work together. As populations shift to adults and commuters who have less time on campus, less time for everything, and may have less contact than residential students with the university or college overall, cooperation and new ways of working together will become critical. Many current distance education programs have models in which faculty and student services personnel work hand in hand. These may serve as a model for other programs.

Many of the problems presented here could be addressed if both sides communicated more frequently and more clearly.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Whether it should or shouldn't be, most initial contacts will have to come from student services. Given the structure of most universities/colleges and the traditional modes of operating that are found in most schools, it is unlikely that most faculty will worry about such contact. The following are some suggestions for beginning to forge new partnerships with faculty which can make life on campus a better experience for students.

1. Find faculty allies who appreciate what student services has to offer the educational experience. New faculty are a good place to start. It is especially important to try and create allies in departments such a business, math and the sciences. Sometimes it is harder to gain entrance to these departments but they serve a large percentage of the student population and are central to the academic life of many campuses. It may be easier to begin in departments psychology or education but consider others as well.

2. Try to participate in new faculty orientation. Most campuses hold such meetings for new faculty. BRIEFLY introduce key student services personnel and what they do at the university/ college. Think about what these offices have to offer faculty and highlight that in your introduction. What can you do for faculty? Everyone like someone who makes their lives easier. It might be as simple as a place to refer a student having problems or a place to get information for students. Provide an easy to read list of who to contact for what.

3. Follow-up with new faculty after these orientations. A couple of weeks after school has begun, drop by and see if you can answer any questions or direct them to somewhere on campus they need to go. Perhaps, offer suggestions about places to shop or eat near campus. New faculty can be overwhelmed by all of the adjusting necessary in a new job. Maybe you can help ease some of that transition.

4. Write articles for faculty newsletters. Most schools have some sort of faculty newsletter and the editors are often looking for material. The article doesn't necessarily have to be about student services functions. It may be more effective to write about an issue that directly affects faculty (e.g. test anxiety, teaching the adult student) and offer to give more information to anyone who wants to contact you.

5. Participate in faculty development programs. Many campuses have brown bag lunch series or other such programs. Presentations on adult learners is pertinent for many campuses as more adults return to school. Faculty are often familiar with the traditional model of education as most have gone straight through college, graduate school and into academia. Most have little contact with nontraditional learners until they appear in the classroom. Volunteer to give a presentation on such a topic.

6. Invite faculty to give presentations to campus groups or at student services orientations. Make sure to give plenty of advance notice. (This sort of activity can count toward campus service for tenure.) When a faculty member participates, send a letter of appreciation not only to the faculty but to that person's department chair and the dean in charge of academic affairs. It is critical that such acknowledgement be sent. It will encourage repeat presentations. Again, this relates to the tenure issue.

7. Invite a faculty member to a brown bag lunch or out for coffee. This can be especially with new faculty on large campuses who may find it difficult to meet people.

8. Use email to keep faculty informed about what's happening in student services. Keep messages brief but let faculty know that you want them to feel included.

9. Offer to guest lecture in classes. Target specific classes. (e.g. career center people can talk about the MBTI when psychology is covering Jung). Send a list of student services people and their areas of expertise to faculty. Follow-up with a phone call. (Especially for new faculty, it can be difficult to locate guest lecturers. This can be a great way for new faculty to begin to create a list of guest speakers.) Again, try to tap into classes other than psychology and education.

10. For distance educators, keep faculty informed of who handles what so they can give students correct information. Send faculty copies of student information brochures, etc.

11. When you invite faculty to campus events, give them complimentary tickets. It is insulting to receive an invitation to a campus dance and then be asked to pay for tickets. Faculty are more likely to come if they don't have to pay.

12. Be persistent. Your efforts will eventually pay off. If you get rebuffed the first time, try, try again.